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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
25 JUNE 1954

NAVY review
completed.

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT: Interception of Soviet Tanker

1. The Soviet Note protesting the seizure.

Around noon London time on 24 June, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin handed Ambassador Bohlen a note charging that the seizure of the Soviet tanker Tuapse could have been "carried out only by the naval forces of the US."

Contrary to the Polish note of 11 October 1953 to the US, protesting seizure of the Polish freighter Praca on 4 October 1953 by a Chinese Nationalist gunboat, the Soviet note pointedly omits any reference to the Chinese Nationalist destroyer escorts which stopped the Tuapse. Whereas the Polish note charged the US with responsibility for the seizure of the Praca on the ground that Chinese Nationalist forces were under American political and military control, the Soviet note attributes responsibility to the US on the ground that "seizure of a Soviet tanker by a war vessel in waters controlled by a US Naval Fleet could be carried out only by naval forces of the US."

Assuming, of course, Moscow's awareness of the identity of the intercepting warships, the studied omission of any reference to the Chinese Nationalists may reflect Soviet humiliation over having a vessel seized by a gunboat of a regime which Moscow always contemptuously refers to as the "Chiang Kai-shek remnant clique."

The Soviet Union has demanded that the US take measures to return the ship with its crew and cargo. They also demanded that "responsible American personnel who took part in the organization of this illegal act be severely punished." Sole American responsibility for this incident is thereby alleged.

The note was clearly designed to dramatize the standard Sino-Soviet contention that the presence of the US Seventh Fleet violates Chinese sovereignty.

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2. Sequence of events

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At approximately 2300Z on 22 June, the Tuapse was stopped by two Chinese Nationalist destroyer escorts.

US observing aircraft reported at 0740Z on 23 June that a boarding party from Nationalist vessels had left for the Tuapse.

The Tuapse arrived at Kaoshiung, Formosa at 2300Z, 23 June, under escort by Nationalist warships. The crew had attempted a sitdown strike, but when Nationalists took the vessel under tow, the crew manned stations and the ship proceeded under her own power. The Navy reports that Tuapse's cargo was jet fuel.

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